DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 057 744 08 HE 002 730

TITLE Credit for Life and Work Experience.
INSTITUTION YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago, Ill. Career Options Research and Development (CORD).
SPONS AGENCY National Center for Educational Research and Development (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.
BUREAU NO BR-7-0329
PUB DATE Sep 71
NOTE 24p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *College Credits; College Students; *Degree Requirements; *Equivalency Tests; *Higher Education; *Work Experience

ABSTRACT

This report is concerned with the issues at hand regarding the awarding of academic credit for work or life experience relevant to the field a student wishes to study. Four major recommendations are made within the report: (1) a committee should be set up to govern the accrediting of life and work experience, to determine the overall policy, and to review applications for credit; (2) a counseling programs should be set up to advise students of the accrediting procedure, to help the assess their own backgrounds and qualifications, and to help them obtain sufficient evidence, references, and demonstration of experience; (3) the student should activate the procedure by completing an application and by obtaining such references and information as would be needed to substantiate his claim; and (4) a degree of flexibility should be maintained in order to assure the participating student of the fairest decision possible (HS)

HE002730

# CREDIT FOR LIFE AND WO

*September 1971*

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ED057744

# LIFE AND WORK EXPERIENCE

ED 057 744

# CREDIT FOR LIFE & WORK EXPERIENCE?

| YEAR | 1ST SEM. | | 2ND SEM. | | YEAR | 1ST SEM. | | 2ND SEM. | | YEAR | 1ST SEM. | | 2ND SEM. | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| COURSE TITLE AND NO. | CR | GR | CR | GR | COURSE TITLE AND NO. | CR | GR | CR | GR | COURSE TITLE AND NO. | CR | GR | CR | GR |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

CAREER OPTIONS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT, Project #7-0329, was supported by the U. S. Office of Education, National Center for Educational Research & Development, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, under Section 4 (c) of the Vocational Education Act of 1963, in a grant to the YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO, 19 South LaSalle Street, Chicago, Illinois 60603.

This document was prepared by the staff of Career Options Research and Development:

Robert K. Soong, Executive Director
Jean Wetzel, Associate Director
Barry Warren, Program Director
Jeanette B. Hall, Program Director
George A. Kich, Program Assistant,

as a supporting Advisory Document to the Final Report for the three-year project, 19[illegible]-1971.

Contractors undertaking projects under Government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their professional judgment in the conduct of the project. Points of view or opinion do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Office of Education or YMCA policy or position.

# LIFE CREDIT FOR & EXPERIENCE? WORK

Among the most controversial of New Careers objectives is that of credit for life and work experience, by which is meant: the granting of credits by colleges for non-academically achieved knowledge and proficiency, acquired either previous to or concurrent with enrollment in college programs. Included are such required work experiences as field work, field placement, affiliation, practicum courses, and practice teaching.

The rationale for development of procedures for the granting of credit for life and work experience comes from a number of sources.

## Rationale

# 1

CREDENTIALS Within the social and human services, both public and private, the power-holders are professionals who, in struggling to establish their own professionalism, have stressed the importance of formal credentials (academic degrees). In the absence of definitions and measures of competency, academic credentials have been accepted as a standard and have been used as evidence of proficiency by employers and educators alike. Civil service systems typically use degrees, sometimes supplemented by examinations, to sort applicants. "Credentialism" is well institutionalized. In trying to increase the options open to students and service workers, particularly those of lower-class origins, we must recognize the reality of credentials and provide as many paths as possible to reach those credentials and the professional standards and salaries they command.

# 2

COMPENSATION Formal education is widely accepted in this country as necessary for advancement within the class structure. As the general level of educational attainment rises, the number of degrees needed by an individual wishing upward mobility increases. Correspondingly, the number and types of educational options have also increased. But a class bias prevails in the number and type of educational options open to any individual. Where educational credentials are used as the basis for hiring and promotion, there is a concomitant class bias in employment.

Audrey Cohen, President of the College for Human Services, New York City, has placed accredited work experience at the very center of the experimental college's program.

> "Men and women of the inner city have every American citizen's right to equal opportunity for higher education. They have been deprived of sufficient preparatory education by a complex of circumstances deriving from poverty and segregation. Now, as a by-product of the social revolution taking place among urban minorities, they are awakened to the potential of education, and many are clamoring for it."

( Audrey C. Cohen, "College for Human Services: A Model for Innovation in Urban Higher Education", New Careers Perspectives, Reprint Series #6. Washington, D.C.: New Careers Information Clearinghouse, New Careers Institute, University Research Corporation., March 1969. page 4. )

# 3

PRECEDENT While credit for "life" experience is still an experimental concept, credit for work experience has long been required for graduation or certification as a school teacher, sockal worker, nurse, doctor, or paramedical professional. In fact, the trend in Social Work (MA level) and Social Welfare (BA level) is toward more hours of work experience and at earlier stages in the student's academic career. The minimum quality of work experience is guaranteed by selection of supervisors or "field faculty," setting up laboratory schools, demonstration of skills, written reports or examinations, and careful coordination of the schooling and work experience. Concurrent work for credit is, however, easier to assess and to incorporate than is prior work experience or even concurrent work experience which the college has not pre-arranged and regulated.

It should be noted that one of the differences between the mature student (the New Careerist) and the regular college student is the wealth of experience which the former brings to the classroom. This difference can be recognized and built upon rather than disregarded.

# 4

ROLE OF JUNIOR COLLEGES  Most New Careers programs are functioning within community (or junior) colleges, and they represent quite a breakthrough for these new educational institutions in defining a distinctive role for themselves within the educational community. When a college undertakes such a program, it commits itself to admitting a "new kind" of student. It commits itself to forming systemic relationships with the institutions, agencies, organizations, and employers of its community. And it commits itself to a position of advocacy among other educational institutions which can accept or reject its graduates and transfer students.

Financial considerations enter the picture as well as philosophical ones. Indications are that as there is a growth in the number and size of New Careers programs, there will be a growing number of colleges won over to accrediting of non-academic experience --and it will be the junior colleges which lead the way.

# 5

LEARNING It is readily acknowledged that a college education has value far beyond the role of "credentialing." At the same time, none would dispute that learning encompasses far more than formal education. Successful job performance is, in part, the process of learning to deal with one's environment, both physical and social. Paraprofessionals in the human services are often hired on the basis of their learning and experience with their own environment--to work in the community of residence; to work with clients, patients, or groups of similar background as the paraprofessional; to deal with problems that the paraprofessional knows out of his own direct experience. The mature student who enters the classroom does so in order to learn the additional skills and knowledge needed to progress in his field.

While it is true that people learn in different ways and at different rates, the education which is most useful is that which can be incorporated into what a student already knows. The mature student, unlike the "regular" student, has past and present work and life experience to interpret and to incorporate--a reality grounding--that combines with the motivation to overcome past deprivation. The result is a ripe learning situation. Mature students may not <u>need</u> as much time as regular students to acquire the wherewithal for job performance and advancement. Given the fact that many New Careerists have children to care for and a concurrent part- or full-time job while they are working for their degrees, they also don't <u>have</u> as much time to invest.

SERVICES Within the human services, strong forces for change are at work. The demand and the need for expanded and improved services call for application of varied efforts, including the retraining of professionals, increased financial support, and the development of new delivery systems. Within all the fields that are regarded as human services--physical health, mental health, social services, law enforcement and legal aid, education, recreation--the hiring of paraprofessionals (community aides, liaisons, outreach workers, etc.) is being effected as one means of expanding and improving services.

However, paraprofessionals are too often simply "added on" without changing the working relationships or building in the needed improvement in the quality of services offered. The paraprofessional finds that he is hired for a dead-end job, that there is no way to qualify for horizontal or vertical mobility, that he has been tracked and trapped into education and/or employment which offers no options, that he has little opportunity or means for improving the nature of services in his own community.

Obviously more than hiring is necessary. As many paraprofessionals as possible must, in as little time as possible, be prepared for advancement to positions of responsibility in and for human services. There are not and there will not be enough professionals produced through current channels to do the job.

**The Challenge,**

↓

**Therefore,**

is to devise an efficient and effective accrediting process that provides the instruction needed to do the job and that provides the greatest number of options for horizontal and vertical job mobility and for further education. Career-oriented college programs should be aimed at producing graduates with a specified level of competency, rather than requiring a specified number of years of full-time attendance or a specific number of credit hours.

A number of colleges have begun to demonstrate such flexibility. Experiments are being tried on various levels of education--classrooms without walls, credit for travel, CLEP (College Level Equivalency Program for the BA degree, operates like the GED high school diploma program), credit for taking part in political campaigns, independent study, and so forth.

In a recent survey of 232 New Careers programs in 162 colleges across the nation, the New Careers Development Center (New York University) found that 48% reported granting credit for work experi nce. Some of the remaining 52%, however, did grant credit for practicums, practice teaching, and field work without considering it "work experience," while some granted credit for prior work experience, considering it "life experience." Obviously future surveys of the extent and methods of accrediting work and life experience will have to include some good definitions of the terms.

Career Options Research & Development finds, as did NCDC, that there is wide acceptance of the concept of credit for life and work experience, but there is little guidance for working out methods and procedures for granting such credit. The college coordinators and planners are hung up on the "how," not the "why."

(Alan Gartner and Harriet Johnson, An Examination of College Programs for Paraprofessionals. New York University: New Careers Development Center, October, 1970. p. 9-11.)

# ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

1. Should credit be determined by program or by course? It is probably easier to work on a program-by-program basis, examining the types of work and life experience relevant to a specific program (mental health technology, for example) and granting "general" credits according to the amount of experience students have. It is still necessary, however, to determine which courses are being "substituted" by the work experience and which are still required of the student. There is the further drawback in that general credit may not be transferable to other educational institutions. To grant credit by course requires a knowledge of relevant experience plus knowledge of content areas covered by all courses within a program. Both quantity and quality of experience should be considered such that a transcript would not differentiate between academically and non-academically achieved credit.

2. Should there be a limit to the amount of credit that can be granted for non-academically achieved competence? It is possible to conceive of students being granted degrees without ever sitting through a class, having demonstrated their knowledge and skills through a variety of exams and documenting their experience with references and other means. (If it did nothing else, such a possibility would raise questions from the business office of the college.) Guidelines of some government-funded programs establish limits, both minimum and maximum, for work experience. The NCDC study cited earlier found that colleges offering credit for work experience <u>averaged</u> 15 credits toward a two year degree and 20 credits toward a four year degree. The question of limits may have to be handled on a program-by-program basis, depending upon the intrinsic nature of the program, guidelines, negotiation with transfer schools, and a variety of other factors.

3.

3. How do we determine correspondence between experience and curriculum; how do we know what work and life experiences are relevant to the academic field? Some content areas are relatively well standardized to start with, and yield to examinations--for example, the "freshman" courses in languages, math, English, and physical sciences. We should be able to assume that career-oriented (occupational, vocational-technical) programs are based on the knowledge and skills needed for competance in the world of work. Within the human services, there is a core of knowledge and skills which are readily transferable. The skills developed by a recreation aide, for example, are useful to a teacher aide or group worker. Similarly, a community health aide has learned skills which will be helpful in a mental health setting or social service agency. Involvement of administrators and supervisors of agencies, organizations, and institutions which will employ the graduates of the program, as well as curriculum planners, program coordinators, and department heads, should insure that course objectives are clear and realistic, that relevance is built into the curriculum, and that correspondence can be articulated and dealt with.

4. How can we make sure that procedures are fair to all involved? Let's take a negative example. A college invests one person--the department chairman--with the authority to determine how much credit individual students should receive and for what experience. In this situation, a student who is "liked" by the chairman can come out way ahead of another, with comparable experience, who doesn't "hit it off" with the chairman. It is probably better to establish a committee which meets regularly to determine both the over-all policy and the accrediting of individual cases. But even with very careful deliberation, there is the possibility of being unfair; thus, a course of appeal should be open to applicants. Finally, it should be noted that there exists a measure of arbitrariness in any college's definitions of credit and grade. One three-hour course may require significantly more work than another three-hour course. Similarly, one student may benefit more from a specific course than his classmate. Judgement will have to be used in determining comparability of experience to course work to insure that credit is given where it is due and only where it is due.

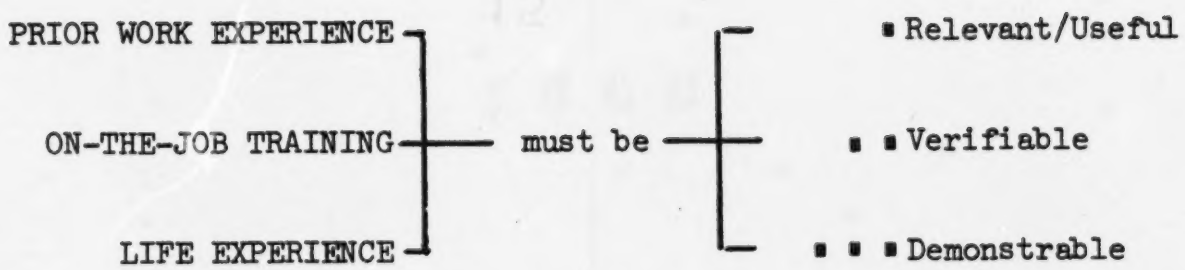
# F o c u s

Up to this point, our focus has been rather broad, incorporating a variety of life and work experience. Since some types of experience are much harder for the college personnel to deal with, we will begin to focus on the "harder" areas. We will exclude from further consideration such types of experience as practicums, field placement, practice teaching, affiliations, work-study placement, and all training which has been pre-arranged by the college or by the employer in conjunction with the college. Here the accrediting procedure is activated by the college (or sometimes by the employer) rather than the student. Here precedents abound, and the program planner or coordinator has only to consider the processes and controls in use at other schools. The more difficult types of experiences boil down to three: 1) prior work experience, 2) on-the-job training, prior or concurrent, and 3) non-employment (life) experience . . . . . .

To
which
we
now

**t u r n**

15




▪ While it is true that human services programs make use of interpersonal and technical skills as well as attitudes and abilities which can be learned in non-academic settings, not all prior work or life experience is relevant and useful. Work experience in industrial, agricultural, and most business settings is usually irrelevant. On-the-job training might have been so specific to the employer or so narrowly defined as to offer little preparation for human services. And life experiences may be insufficient even where relevant. A woman may well raise six children yet be a poor candidate for a Child Care Aide program. Less obvious but just as important is the possibility that prior experiences may have been damaging to readiness for human services education. Living in poverty or in a ghetto can leave a student "scarred" and "handicapped" so that empathy with the poor is hampered by life experiences rather than facilitated, as is commonly assumed.

▪ ▪ The factual and descriptive elements of experience must be verifiable. Did student X indeed work for the hospital for two full years? What did student Y learn in the training course? Did student Z participate in the human relations workshop?

▪ ▪ ▪ The skills and knowledge supposedly gained through work or life experience must be demonstrable. The student might be asked to write a report on the sensitivity training he underwent, to give an oral report of problem-solving undertaken by the organization he headed, to pass an exam on the content he claims to have mastered through reading, to demonstrate that he can conduct an interview. References should be obtained that will reflect the quality of experience and permit assessment of the value of the experience.

# Recommendations

A COMMITTEE should be set up to govern the accrediting of life and work experience, to determine the overall policy, and to review applications for credit and either grant or reject the applications for the reasons stated in the preceding section. The Committee should be composed of various faculty and administrators, counselors, and community people who know about employment circumstances in the community. They must meet regularly and often enough to process applications efficiently and fairly. The Committee must be of sufficient size that investigations can be conducted and proof procedures set up.

The COUNSELORS, Program Coordinators, Deans, or others in touch with new students should assist those students by: 1) informing them of the accrediting procedure; 2) helping them to assess their own backgrounds and qualifications in reference to the courses and programs offered at the college; and 3) helping them to obtain sufficient evidence, references, and demonstration of experiences.

The STUDENT should activate the procedure by completing an application such as the ones shown below, and by obtaining such references and information as would be needed to substantiate his claim. He should further have access to some appeal process if he feels that the Committee acted unjustly.

While schedules and rules have to be established, there should be room for FLEXIBILITY in the Committee's disposition of applications. If most, but not all of a course requirement has been met, no harm is done by granting two credits, say, for a 3-credit course and then informing the student of additional work to be done for the third credit. If a single application contains evidence of accomplishment within two or more content areas, partial or full credit can be given for more than one course. Quality of experience (grade) should be no harder to gauge than for academically achieved competency.

Application # ____

Date:_____

APPLICATION FOR CREDIT FOR WORK EXPERIENCE

Student's Name:_____

Dates of Employment: From _____ To_____

Employer:_____

Address:_____

Phone:_____ Salary:_____

Position:_____

Describe your duties and responsibilities:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Who was your supervisor? Who were you responsible to? ____

_____

Employment was: _____Part-time (less than 35 hours/week)

_____Full-time

How were you trained for this position?_____

_____

_____

What skills or knowledge do you have as a result of this employment?_____

_____

Employment was relevant to what college courses or programs?

_____

ATTACH REFERENCES TO APPLICATION.

Application # _____

Date:_____

APPLICATION FOR CREDIT FOR WORK EXPERIENCE--PART II
(To be completed by the counselor or committee chairman)

Student's Name:_____

RECOMMENDATIONS

___ Investigation is required of:_____

_____

_____

Investigation completed by (name):_____

Date completed:_____ Findings:_____

_____

___ Additional proof required: _____ Term paper/report

_____ Written exam (Prepared by:_____)

_____ Oral exam (Before:_____.)

_____ Other proof: _____

Date completed:_____ Findings:_____

_____

___ Additional references requested.

DISPOSITION

Credit Granted:

| # Credits | Course # |
|---|---|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

Application Rejected:

Work not relevant_____

Insufficient proof_____

Less than 1 credit hr____

Other reasons _____

_____

_____

Date of Disposition:_____ 19

Application # ____

Date:_____

APPLICATION FOR CREDIT FOR ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

Student's Name: _____

Date Training Began: _____ Until: _____

Employer:_____

Address:_____

Who directed training? Name: _____

Position:_____

Other Qualifications:_____

_____

Supervision was provided by:_____

Position:_____

Describe the On-the-Job Training you received:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Hours per week in training:_____ How many weeks?_____

Did you complete training?_____ Were you given a certificate or other evidence of training?_____

Training was related to what position with the employer?____

_____

Was training a part of government-funded programs (e.g. OEO, WIN Program, Social Rehabilitation Service)?_____

Training covered content of which college courses?_____

_____

ATTACH REFERENCES TO APPLICATION.

lication # ____

e:_____

ING

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

ed:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

any weeks?_____

you given a certi-

_____

the employer?____

_____

ograms (e.g. OEO,

?_____

courses?_____

_____

Application # ____

Date:_____

APPLICATION FOR CREDIT FOR ON-THE-JOB TRAINING--PART II
(To be completed by the counselor or committee chairman)

Student's Name:_____

RECOMMENDATIONS

___ Investigation is required of:_____

_____

_____

Investigation completed by (name):_____

Date completed:_____ Findings:_____

_____

___ Additional proof required: _____ Term paper/report.

_____ Written exam (Prepared by:_____.)

_____ Oral exam (Before:_____.)

Date completed:_____ Findings:_____

_____

___ Additional references requested.

DISPOSITION

| Credit Granted: | | Application Rejected: |
|---|---|---|
| # Credits | Course # | Training not relevant ___ |
| _____ | _____ | Insufficient proof _____ |
| _____ | _____ | Less than 1 credit hour__ |
| _____ | _____ | Other Reasons_____ |
| | | _____ |
| | | _____ |

Date of Disposition:_____

Application # _____

Date:_____

APPLICATION FOR CREDIT FOR NON-EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

Student's Name:_____

Nature of Experience:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What skills or knowledge do you have as a result of this experience?_____

_____

_____

Beginning date:_____ Until:_____

Who can verify this experience:_____

His/Her position or qualifications:_____

_____

What evidence or proof can you show of this experience?___

_____

Experience was related to: _____ Employment; _____ School; _____ Professional association; _____ Voluntary organization; _____ Other:_____

Experience was relevant to what college courses or programs?

_____

_____

ATTACH REFERENCES TO APPLICATION

Application # _____

Date:_____

APPLICATION FOR CREDIT FOR NON-EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE:PART II
(To be completed by the counselor or committee chairman)

Student's Name:_____

RECOMMENDATIONS

___ Investigation is required of:_____

_____

_____

Investigation completed by (name):_____

Date completed:_____ Findings:_____

_____

___ Additional proof required: _____ Term paper/report

_____ Written exam (Prepared by:_____)

_____ Oral exam (Before:_____)

_____ Other proof:_____

Date completed:_____ Findings:_____

_____

___ Additional references requested.

DISPOSITION

Credit Granted:

| # Credits | Course # |
|---|---|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

Application Rejected:

Irrelevant _____

Insufficient proof_____

Less than 1 credit hr____

Other reasons_____

_____

_____

Date of Disposition:_____

# CONCLUSIONS

Toward the aim of getting disadvantaged people through the channels to receipt of credentials, several paths have been attempted: 1) getting them into the "usual" academic route through released time from employment, tuition aid, counseling, compensatory education, and various incentives; 2) accelerating the usual academic route through new curricula, supplementary learning processes, credit for life and work experience, and accepting into college students without high school diplomas; and 3) providing new credentials, certificates, short-term and special classes, and specialized training. If we were to specify The Optimal Mix of Alternative Learning Vehicles for Human Service occupations, life and work experience would be prominant.

Unfortunately, in many states, the career-oriented (or occupational or vocational-technical) programs are regarded as terminal. The AA graduate loses credits in transferring to senior level institutions or, even more tragic, is simply rejected. Baccalaureate colleges have, however, begun the trend of relaxing their entry requirements. It is hoped that the trend will continue and that the junior college will be but one step on the ladder. The innovations and flexibility shown in junior colleges, particularly those on the east and west coasts of the country, will eventually be infused into the entire system of higher education. Credit for life and work experience is one such innovation.